

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 2212

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS MASS BC
SUBJECT: BOTSWANA'S REQUEST FOR SECURITY ASSISTANCE

REFS: A) STATE 206778 B) GABORONE 2090 C) GABORONE 1980

1. SUMMARY. DEPARTMENT WILL APPRECIATE THE DIFFICULTY, ON BASIS OF REF A, OF SENDING A CLEAR SIGNAL TO GOB IN RESPONSE TO ITS REQUEST FOR A STATUS REPORT ON SECURITY ASSISTANCE. IN INFORMAL MEETINGS WITH GOB OFFICIALS (E.G., TIBONE AND STEENKAMP), I HAVE TRIED TO CONVEY A BALANCED IMPRESSION OF (A) UNIFORMLY FAVORABLE SENTIMENTS MATCHED BY (B) PRACTICAL (MOSTLY POLITICAL) OBSTACLES IN THE U.S. FACED WITH ITS SERIOUS SECURITY PROBLEMS, OUTLINED MOST RECENTLY BY REFS B AND C, GOB OFFICIALS ARE UNDERSTANDABLY UNIMPRESSED BY DESCRIPTION OF U.S. DILEMMA. THIS MESSAGE REPORTS THE LATEST APPROACH BY GOB OFFICIAL AND REQUESTS REPLIES TO BASIC QUESTIONS CONCERNING LEVEL OF AUTHORITY REQUIRED TO AUTHORIZE ARMS TRANSFER TO GOB, PARTICULARLY IF AMOUNT IS UNDER \$7 MILLION, CURRENT STATUS OF GOB REQUEST AND GUIDANCE ON WHAT WE MAY TELL GOB. END SUMMARY.

2. LATEST RANKING GOB OFFICIAL TO PROBE STATUS OF GOB REQUEST WAS MININFO KWELAGOB (WHO IS DE FACTO DEFENSE
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MINISTER). HE APPROACHED ME SEPTEMBER 7 TO STRESS URGENCY OF THE SITUATION AS REFLECTED IN PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE (REFS B AND C). HE STRESSED POPULAR PRESSURES TO ARM POPULATION AND TO PAY COMPENSATION FOR DAMAGE CAUSED BY RHODESIAN INCURSIONS -- BOTH SUGGESTIONS BEING HELD OFF BY GOB PLEDGE TO STRENGTHEN AND MAKE REAL THE AUTHORITY OF BDF. HE ASKED WHAT STATUS OF GOB REQUEST

WAS.

3. I SUMMARIZED FOR HIM, AS I HAD FOR OTHERS, WHAT I UNDERSTAND STATUS TO BE, I.E., UNANIMOUS AND FUNDAMENTAL SYMPATHY BALANCED OFF BY PRACTICAL PROBLEMS OF U.S. INTRODUCING ARMS INTO THE AREA. KWELAGOB SEEMED ENCOURAGED BY SYMPATHY AND SAID HE THOUGHT IT IMPORTANT THAT I CONVEY THIS TO GOB OFFICIALLY SO IT COULD BE REPORTED TO THE CABINET. I SAID I WOULD BE GLAD TO REPEAT WHAT I HAD SAID OFFICIALLY. IN TURN, I SAID IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF HE COULD GIVE US AN ESTIMATE OF THE VALUE OF ARMS GOB WAS SEEKING TO ACQUIRE FROM U.S. SOURCES. I NOTED WHAT APPEARED TO BE SIMPLIFIED PROCEDURES IF THE AMOUNT OF GOB REQUEST WAS UNDER \$7 MILLION. I ASKED WHAT HE ESTIMATED TO BE THE AMOUNT OF GOB REQUIREMENTS. KWELAGOB REPLIED HE DID NOT THINK THE AMOUNT WOULD EXCEED THAT AND SAID HE WOULD GLADLY LOOK INTO THE MATTER. WE AGREED TO MEET SOON IN ORDER TO PURSUE THE SUBJECT.

4. IN PREPARATION FOR THIS MEETING, THE DEPARTMENT'S ASSISTANCE IS URGENTLY REQUESTED IN OBTAINING REPLIES TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ON: (A) LEVEL OF AUTHORITY REQUIRED FOR SALES, EITHER CREDIT OR COMMERCIAL (CASH); (B) STATUS OF GOB REQUEST; AND (C) WHAT WE MAY TELL GOB.

A) WE READ STATE 157928 (PARA 3) AS MEANING ANY
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FMS CREDIT TRANSACTIONS(I.E., INCLUDING THOSE UNDER \$7 MILLION) REQUIRE PRESIDENTIAL DETERMINATION. IS THIS CORRECT?

B) REVISION OF PART 123 OF THE ITAR (TRANSMITTED BY STATE A-3575) STATES THAT "DEPARTMENT OF STATE" APPROVAL IS REQUIRED FOR TRANSFER OF ARMS "THROUGH EITHER COMMERCIAL OR FMS SALES PROCEDURES" IF CONTRACT IS FOR \$7 MILLION OR MORE. DOES THIS MEAN THAT NEITHER DEPARTMENT APPROVAL NOR PD IS REQUIRED IF COMMERCIAL TRANSACTION IS FOR LESS THAN \$7 MILLION?

C) WHICH BUREAU CLEARANCES ARE STILL REQUIRED BEFORE REQUEST FOR PD CAN BE FORWARDED TO WHITE HOUSE? WHAT OBJECTIONS HAVE BEEN RAISED?

D) ARE OTHER DEPARTMENT/AGENCY CLEARANCES HOLDING UP REQUEST FOR PD?

E) ONCE DEPARTMENT'S POSITION HAS BEEN CONVEYED TO WHITE HOUSE, DO WE ANTICIPATE FURTHER NSC STUDY PRIOR TO PRESIDENTIAL DECISION?

F) REF A (PARA 2) STATES DEPARTMENT'S DECISION "MUST BE MADE IN TERMS OF LONG-RANGE MUTUAL SECURITY INTERESTS AND CONTRIBUTION TO REGIONAL PEACE". IN VIEW OF GOB'S UNQUESTIONED DETERMINATION AND OBLIGATION TO EQUIP ITS DEFENSE FORCE, IS IT CONCEIVABLE THAT PROSPECT OF GOB DECISION TO TURN TO EAGER SOVIET OR PRC

SUPPLIERS (IN EVENT OF U.S. REJECTION OR PROCRASTINATION) WOULD
ITSELF CONSTITUTE A THREAT TO SUCH "LONG RANGE MUTUAL SECURITY
INTERESTS" AND PROSPECTS FOR REGIONAL PEACE?

G) ON THIS MATTER AFFECTING VITAL NATIONAL SECURITY
INTERESTS, USG OWES GOB EARLY AND MORE DETAILED STATUS REPORT
(ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF PRESIDENT KHAMA'S PERSONAL CONCERN). CAN
DEPARTMENT INDICATE TIME FRAME IN WHICH DECISION IS EXPECTED?

H) PLEASE INDICATE WHICH OF REPLIES TO THE ABOVE WE MAY
CONVEY TO GOB.

5. WE WOULD APPRECIATE REPLY TO ABOVE QUESTIONS ASAP IN ORDER
TO PURSUE THE SUBJECT WITH MINISTER KWELAGOB. THIS WOULD ALSO
HELP SET THE STAGE FOR FOLLOW-UP MEETINGS DURING THE COMING
VISIT OF COUNTRY OFFICER KEITH MCCORMICK SCHEDULED SEPTEMBER 23-25.
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